I. Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims replaces without prejudice all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of sealing a fluid sample collection device, comprising:

loading a fluid sample collection device with a fluid sample, said device comprising a housing having at least one substantially planar surface that includes an orifice in fluid communication with an internal fluid sample holding chamber which terminates at an internal capillary stop;

slidably moving a sealing element over the orifice of the fluid sample collection device prior to insertion into a reader and over at least a portion of said substantially planar surface in a way that displaces any excess fluid sample away from the orifice, seals the fluid sample within said holding chamber, and inhibits the fluid sample from prematurely breaking through the internal capillary stop; and

expelling a metered portion of the sample through the capillary stop.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the sealing element includes a locking feature, wherein the locking feature engages after the sealing element covers the orifice, and wherein the engaging element secures the sealing element to the housing in an air-tight manner in the region surrounding the orifice.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said housing includes an overflow chamber that receives excess fluid sample displaced from the orifice by the sealing element.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the device is a blood sample collection device and the fluid sample is a blood sample.

5. (Currently Amended) A fluid sample collection device, comprising:

a housing comprising at least one substantially planar surface and at least one sealing element,

wherein said substantially planar surface has an orifice that is in fluid communication with an internal fluid sample holding chamber which terminates at an internal capillary stop, and

wherein said sealing element is slidably movable over the orifice of the fluid sample collection device prior to insertion into a reader and over at least a portion of the substantially planar surface in a way that displaces any excess fluid sample away from the orifice, seals the fluid sample within the holding chamber, and inhibits the fluid sample from prematurely breaking through the capillary stop to an analysis location, wherein the device is configured to expel a metered portion of the sample through the capillary stop.

6. (Original) The device of claim 5, which is a blood sample collection device and the fluid sample comprises a blood sample.

7. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the sealing device is made of a plastic selected from the group consisting of polyesters, ABS and acetals.

8. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the sealing element has a locking feature that engages once the sealing element covers said orifice, where said engagement abuts the sealing element to said housing in an air-tight manner in the region surrounding the orifice.

9. (Original) The device of claim 6, wherein the housing includes an overflow chamber to receive blood displaced from the orifice.

10. (Original) The device of claim 6, wherein the overflow chamber is hollow or includes a blood-absorbing pad.

11. (Original) The device of claim 6, wherein a fixed volume of sample is retained in said holding chamber in the range 1 uL to 1 mL and preferably 5-50 uL.

12. (Original) The device of claim 11, wherein the volume of sample is 5-50 uL.

13. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the orifice is circular or oval.

14. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the orifice is at the proximal end of the holding chamber and the capillary stop is at the distal end, and where the internal conduit is connected to a capillary stop.

15. (Original) The device of claim 13, wherein the diameter of the circular orifice is in the range 1-2 mm or the perimeter of the oval is 1-15 mm.

16. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the region around the orifice is hydrophobic or hydrophilic.

17. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the region around the orifice is an adhesive capable of forming an airtight seal with said sealing means.

18. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the sealing means locks into a sealed position when a tooth on the sealing means enters a slot on said housing.

19. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein said housing comprises a groove for directing the motion of said sealing element in the plane of said orifice.

20. (Original) The device of claim 19, wherein said sealing element comprises a first facet and a second facet, where said first facet provides a sealing surface and said second facet moves in said groove.

21. (Original) The device of claim 20, where in moving from an initial position to a sealed position, the second facet flexes to provide a force to the first facet to seal the orifice.

22. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the collection device has sensing elements for assaying a component of the sample conduit.

23. (Original) The device of claim 5, which incorporates an immunosensor in an internal conduit for assaying a component of the sample.

24. (Original) The device of claim 5, wherein the collection device incorporates an electrochemical sensor in an internal conduit for assaying a component of the sample.

25-62. (Cancelled).

63. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the sealing element is moved over the orifice in a first direction that is substantially perpendicular to a second direction of insertion into the reader.

64. (Previously presented) The device of claim 5, wherein the sealing element is slidably movable over the orifice in a first direction that is substantially perpendicular to a second direction of insertion into the reader.